Parade 6/27/71

Q. *Will General Abrams or President Nixon or Ambassador Bunker ever tell the American public the truth about Lam Son 719, the Laos invasion—how many troops the South Vietnamese lost, how many of our helicopters were lost, how many of the enemy were killed, whether or not the invasion was a victory or a defeat?—Charles W. Peters, Arlington, Va.*

A. The fact that to date none of these gentlemen has made such an announcement indicates that possibly the Laos invasion was anything from a disappointment to a disaster. Foreign sources classify it as a defeat for the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) but it is fatuous to expect President Nixon to use that word to describe the incursion since it was he who gave the go-ahead. The White House position is that it is still too early to tell. President Thieu of South Vietnam called it "a great victory," but his Vice President, Marshal Ky, says it was not. Some American officers in Vietnam diplomatically describe Lam Son 719 as "counterproductive." Others maintain it helped stem the flow of supplies down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.